



Dmitry Orlov  
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Jan 06 15:19



## Make way for billionaires!

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Trump's presidential entourage (the term "cabinet" seems rather limited in scope) includes quite an assemblage of billionaires. The list includes Elon Musk (\$363 billion), Donald Himself (\$6.3 billion), Warren Stephens (\$3.4 billion), Linda McMahon (\$3 billion), Jared Isaacman (\$1.7 billion), Howard Lutnick (\$1.5 billion), Doug Burgum (\$1.1 billion), Vivek Ramaswamy (\$1 billion), Steven Witkoff (\$1 billion) and Scott Bessent (fortune unknown, assumed huge). This assemblage of very wealthy individuals seeing political appointments is completely unprecedented in the annals of US presidential administrations.

Musk is the obvious outlier, since he is wealthier than all of the rest combined by a huge margin, but it is notable that they are all billionaires. Why are giant overstuffed bags of money drawn to Trump like moths to the flame? What might motivate them to pick up the fallen flag of government service and march forth? What do they hope to gain? What do they fear to lose?

But first we must answer an even simpler question: Who are these people? Answer: they are filthy rich bastards. Why bastards? That's simple too: they gained their fortunes over the course of this century — a century during which the US has continuously lost ground. So far over the course of the 21st century China's industrial production has increased by a factor of 10, along with the fortunes of the Chinese population as a whole, while US industrial production has increased by a factor of 1, growing by a fraction of a percent. If we exclude from consideration the top 1% of Americans (by wealth and income) as an uncharacteristic aberration (they are a country within a country, if you will), the US has grown significantly poorer.

This becomes immediately and abundantly clear to anyone who flies into the US from one of the modern, glittering megalopolises such as Beijing, Moscow or Dubai. The place is old — simply outdated and unfashionable, rather than antique or classic, having been cheaply and hastily put together to start with. It is run down and dirty. The people are cheaply and carelessly dressed and are vulgar, slovenly, often pushy and rude, quick to anger and violence and generally abusive. The food that is widely available to them is too low-quality even for the pig trough. Unsurprisingly, many of them look ill: sallow or pasty-faced and obese to an astounding extent.

Obscenities fly about in public places whether or not there are children present. The children are a special case. They are not like normal children — curious, full of wonder at the amazing world around them and eager to explore it and to make contact with anyone they meet. Rather, they are fearful of strangers, estranged even from their own parents whose parenting often seems half-hearted and disingenuous, and sunk into the meaningless abyss of some digital device that has been thrust into their hands practically from birth as a sort of electronic

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pacifier. They are poised to remain blinkered, infantile and digitally addicted for the rest of their sad little lives.

And then there are the actual addicts, flopped out inside tents that stretch for many kilometers along major roads, stumbling zombie-like along the sidewalks in search of their next dose of fentanyl or standing slouched over, flopped over on the sidewalk or stumbling about some more once they find it. They are the living dead of American society — people for whom that society no longer finds a purpose except as fodder for government corruption. The government keeps the borders open, giving the drug cartels free reign. The government also prints and hands out money to the addicts which filters back to the drug cartels. The drug cartels then bribe government officials to keep the scheme in operation. The victims of this scheme are not missed: according to government statistics, they barely exist. They are not even unemployed, you see; they are a different category altogether called "not in labor force" and there is over 100 million of these — an entire third of the US population!

The mental landscape is equally wretched. Television screens are everywhere — in airports, lobbies, bars, restaurants, waiting rooms — blasting out equal portions of advertising, celebrity trivia and lies. The celebrity trivia is gradually being replaced with AI-generated content. The lies are rather curious; most of the information about the outside world seems to be organized into very specific tropes concocted by the CIA and repeated ad nauseam. Some of them are so preposterous that they are the stuff of comedy. "The Russians build their rockets using chips scavenged from Ukrainian washing machines" is one such trope. The Russians use them to laugh at Americans; but it is all that the vast majority of Americans know about the rest of the world!

As for information about the US itself, an order is in effect to maintain a sense of normalcy no matter what is happening. Bad news are always treated as a "crisis", by its nature temporary and quickly forgotten whether it has been mitigated in any way or simply ignored. The giant and growing piles of unsolved crises are treated as "old news" and never mentioned again to keep the presentation upbeat and positive, because otherwise the advertisers would start to complain.

This may seem like a digression, but it is essential to set the scene against which to gauge the success of Trump's little band of billionaires. Quite a lot of Americans might not care too much about any of the above because, you see, the people I described are losers and losers don't matter because America is the land of opportunity and if some people don't avail themselves of that opportunity then it's their own damn fault. Maybe they are unlucky or lazy or just stupid; America, for the "hard-working men and women of this great nation" oft-mentioned in political speeches, is for the taking with all of God's blessings and the above-listed Trumpean billionaires just happened to be particularly well blessed. Musk, in particular, is so hugely blessed that he is practically a demigod.

And what American wouldn't want to be a demigod just like Musk? Even an American who lives in a trailer park and dines out of dumpsters behind fast food joints still wants to have the opportunity to dream of being rich like Musk. The cult of Mammon is so deeply ingrained in American culture that it is not even perceived as such for all of its blatancy: "In god we trust", it says on American money — spelled out in all capitals, so it is most likely a lower-case god whose name is Mammon (μᾰμμ), which is Hebrew for "money" and, figuratively, "wealth".

But this begs an important question: Can someone be successful if their country is failing? In an ideal world, it is possible to imagine someone who is justly and lavishly compensated for faithfully and very effectively serving the public good — alas, there isn't enough of that public good to go around and the public cause fails as a whole, but still... But is this really the case with Trump's merry band of billionaires, or are they more likely of the ethos espoused by Nassim Nicholas Taleb, according to whom the goal is to make your "fuck you money," after which point you are no longer anyone's wage slave and can do or not do whatever you want. And what Trump's billionaires want to do is... wait for it... work for the government! What?!

If you believe that these über-wealthy types have been overcome by a sudden urge to serve the public good, then I have some very nice Florida swampland to sell you. I'll even throw in some giant anacondas and hungry-hungry alligators completely free of charge. Come and let bloodsucking flying insects suck you dry — I'm sure you'll love it! Back to our story: über-rich types generally only respond to three types of emotional stimuli: vanity, greed and fear, in this exact order. Vanity is at the forefront once greed is sufficiently satisfied. What is sufficient differs from person to person but I am sure that beyond the first billion the urge to

flaunt one's wealth exceeds the urge to amass even more of it. Nor is the fear of losing it all at the forefront if everything is as rosy as mainstream American economists would have us believe. Yes, inflation is a bit high and government debt is growing faster than the economy, but unemployment is low and financial markets are stable.

Is it vanity, then, that motivated Trump's merry band of billionaires to seek political appointments within the federal bureaucracy? This seems very highly unlikely. The job of a government bureaucrat who is a political appointee is hardly a vanity job. There are lots of boring meetings to sit through and lots of mind-numbing paper shuffling. Not only that, but a government bureaucrat is expected to be a team player, which a fabulously wealthy oligarch is normally loath to do. Trump is as vane as they make them, but he has won the fabulous position of "the leader of the free world" (whatever that means) and that is a sufficiently glamorous position to tickle anyone's fancy. The billionaires on his team, on the other hand, would be playing second fiddle to another billionaire and, in the case of Elon Musk, to one who is his inferior.

Americans lack titles of nobility; instead, they determine social rank by the number of digits in someone's net worth; someone with a seven-digit salary is considered properly middle-class while a six-digit salary is far more humble and someone who only makes five digits is practically a peon. And the fact is that Musk outranks Trump, having two more digits in his net worth. Trump feels safe because, as he put it, "Elon can't be president because he wasn't born in this country, ha-ha!" That "ha-ha" has an insecure, defensive ring to it; if it were not for that legalistic catch, it would be unclear "whom would be commanding whom," to paraphrase Virginia Woolf. But Elon himself must chafe at being outranked by someone whose wealth is inferior to his. Let us therefore dismiss the notion that what drove these billionaires to seek political appointments is vanity.

Next in line is greed. While it is certainly the main motive force that drove these bloated moneybags to amass stupendous wealth even as much of their country degenerated into a third-world hellhole, it most certainly became less significant after they amassed the first billion because the second or the third billion requires doing just as much work and taking on just as much risk but produces much less of an endorphin release. Perhaps this is why the net worth of five of Trump's billionaires seems to have largely stalled out just past the \$1 billion mark.

More importantly, government work is not a good way to amass billions. Look at all the effort Joe Biden and his son Hunter put into corrupt activities, turning the Ukraine first into a personal fiefdom and then into a dismembered failed state, funneling billions of in US government funds to it (most of them subsequently stolen) — all for the sake of amassing perhaps a hundred million, perhaps two hundred in kickbacks — chump change for a billionaire. And Joe Biden could afford to take the risk, hiding behind presidential immunity and having the authority to pardon his son. Someone who would be lower down on the political totem pole and already a billionaire would hardly consider taking such risks.

And so we get to fear. What do billionaires have to fear? It is certainly not the US justice system because it offers the best justice money can buy and they have enough money to buy it. And they have no reason to fear the US political establishment since both the elected and the appointed officials are quite affordably priced. By process of elimination, what they have to fear is the failure of the US financial system itself. Their net worth is denominated in US dollars and if dollar goes kaput, so does their net worth. But this still doesn't answer the following question: Why would these billionaires seek political appointments themselves instead of just finding someone to do their bidding for a reasonable fee? After all, they are not strangers to hiring people to do things for them, from domestics to legal representatives. What is different in this case? This question is most puzzling!

Why would a billionaire take to driving his own limousine, piloting his own jet or skippering his own mega-yacht? What sort of a situation would cause the denizens of the upper deck of the Titanic to abandon their cigars and their snifters of single malt and to storm the bridge, dismissing the captain and his mates and taking over the helm? Is the situation so dire that these billionaires can no longer trust anyone at all to avoid disaster?

It is easy to point to a scenario most dire. The US government debt is so large that if it were laid out in stacked containers full of \$100 bills it would be visible from orbit with unaided eye. A third of that amount has to be rolled over in the course of the next year. A third of the federal budget has to be deficit-financed with more borrowing. Foreigners are no longer eager to snap up new US debt issuance,

leaving the Federal Reserve and various domestic financial chumps (pension funds, insurers, money market funds) as the creditors of last resort. Close to half of the US economy is sustained through federal spending.

Nobody knows exactly when "this sucker is going to go down" (© George W. Bush) but go down it will. Financial markets will seize up and the net worth of our illustrious billionaires will shrivel, leaving them standing in the nude in an uncomfortably cool breeze. Perhaps they are clever enough to know that this is bound to happen over the next four years — the years of Trump's second and final presidential term. And perhaps they realize that following business-as-usual procedures in either the legislative or the executive branch is not going to be effective in avoiding the fiscal cliff.

This, then, is my conclusion. Trump's billionaires are wild with fear that the fiscal cliff will happen some time soon — during Trump's term. To avoid losing it all, they want to be in a position to take desperate, completely illegal, blatantly self-serving and ultimately self-destructive steps. It may involve jamming the works in a way that will simply stop the US government from spending money. It may involve some other wildly unpopular steps, being sure that there will never be any more elections at which the citizens could register their displeasure. It may involve creating crises in an effort to light backfires that might limit the scope of the coming financial conflagration. Perhaps they already have an emergency plan of some sort, or perhaps they just want to be in a position to execute on it once they have formulated it.

These billionaires are powerful and they are about to become much more powerful. And they are afraid — very afraid. And if they are afraid, shouldn't you be?

23 💰



rmd

"Cabinet" does seem confining. "Entourage" seems somewhat light. How about "Court"? His "Court", as in kings of old, is comprised of what passes for great warriors (along with a few wannabes) in the west, namely billionaires, who have conquered the capitalist systems, seizing, stealing and vanquishing all before them. Now we know what to expect!

Jan 06 16:29



Dmitry Orlov

rmd, how about "presidential cabaret"?

Jan 06 16:59 😊 1



Michael Dowd

Assuming billionaires are the ones who really run the world from behind the scenes and have now achieved most of their personal goals, I believe they want to do what they can to make America better and help bring the United States into peace with the rest of the world while protecting their own wealth.

They know our current path will lead to Armageddon which they wish to avoid as they will lose everything.

We should be cheering them on as we have no other viable choice.

Jan 06 16:34 🤔👍❤️ 5



Dmitry Orlov

Michael Dowd, your comment almost made me throw up.

Jan 06 16:46 🤔👍 2



Barb Stapleton

Michael Dowd, yeah dunno. I like the billionaires want "peace". Which one can you name actually just one even that has this goal of wanting peace? Maybe they say they want peace, but how did they amass such wealth? with "peace"? take your time try name one such "peaceful" humble one.

Jan 06 17:05 🤔👍 2



Michael Dowd

Trump and the others want peace as they perceive no viable alternative. Their wealth has been largely accumulated through exploitation, manipulation, payoffs, lawsuits and generally shrewd self-serving behavior. Now they perceive the danger to them of such tactics, e.g., the impoverishment of millions, nuclear warfare, internal rebellion, etc., and now are ready for a life-saving (their own) peace strategy.

Jan 06 17:40



Dmitry Orlov

Michael Dowd, what's the use of wanting what you are going to get anyway? The US has lost the arms race to both Russia and China. It has no money for war. The Ukraine was a nice demonstration project

for Russia's military superiority and Oreshnik has made nuclear confrontation obsolete. Wanting peace certainly sounds better than defeat.

Jan 06 17:49 👍 4



**Michael Dowd** Replying to Dmitry Orlov

Dmitry Orlov, Better to seek peace with Russian and China than continuing our present war stance (dance?) and having peace imposed.

Jan 06 18:03



**Silent Bob**

Dmitry, what would you do with 363 billion Rubles? I don't know why I'm asking, and I only do so in the comical sense. Seeing as how the west overall is a tragic comedy at this point. I guess, think big? Like "pie in the sky" big. Great and informative essay as always. You have my thanks. I'll be collapsing if you need me. (Don't know why you would, with 363 billion Rubles and all.) Cheers from USSA.

P.S. Forget "pie in the sky". How about "pie in outer space" big? You can probably pull that off with advanced Russian rocketry and an oven in outer space. (Would you even need an oven in outer space?) You can probably eat it there too, then get back to earth safely and still have some Rubles left over. Just a thought to spark the imagination. God (Jesus, not Mammon) bless you and yours.

Jan 06 17:48 👍 1



**Dmitry Orlov** 🗳️

Silent Bob, money first, dreams second.

Jan 06 17:51 👍 1



**Silent Bob** Replying to Dmitry Orlov

Dmitry Orlov, fair enough. I'm going to have to get a second job. And you might have to wait a while before I can send you the funds. Is Russia hiring?

Jan 06 17:56



**RedShift**

A plausible scenario: <https://thegreatacting.com/read-online-or-download>

Jan 06 18:27 👍 1



**Dmitry Orlov** 🗳️

RedShift, I know the fellow who wrote it. He is a finance guy, meaning that his understanding of mental and physical realities (material and energy flows, civilizational issues, etc.) is rather limited. Finance guys always have a financial plan... until they get punched in the face.

Jan 07 03:07



**RedShift**

What of those billionaires that participated in the attempted extermination of Russia using various other countries (Chechna, Ukraine) as proxies, which also served as a racketing facilities for massive personal gain?

Jan 06 18:34



**Dmitry Orlov** 🗳️

RedShift, what of them? The Russian bear might rip their faces off at some point, but nobody knows when, since bears never signal their intentions.

Jan 07 03:09



**P. A. S.**

What are the chances that the collapse or the military defeat of the USA is so complete and decisive that it is taken over and divided up, with each major power taking a piece, even European powers?

Jan 06 19:17



**Dmitry Orlov** 🗳️

P. A. S., the US can be considered dissolved as soon as US Treasury checks start bouncing. It's already occupied by narcocartels and criminal gangs. Expect more of that.

Jan 07 03:10



**RedShift**

"What is different in this case?" Perhaps to acquire full command and control of a trillion dollar COG infrastructure? And then, from there...

Jan 06 19:23



**Neil MacLeod**

[Just spitballin' here] M. Drumpf et sa coterie de zio-bâtards... will shrewdly move to secure 'their' now 'gone-like-summer-wages' [Russian] collateral via stealth-pivot into a 'rough n ready' updated Monroe Doctrine.


Canada and Greenland will provide 'replacement' security for Wall St/The City.

"Are we rollin', Don? Latin/South America next? WooHoo!"



Jan 06 19:36



Dmitry Orlov 

Neil MacLeod, it's not possible to eat the same slice of pizza twice. Canada and Greenland are already perfectly well ingested and who owns Panama Canal is an organizational issue and barely even an economic one. The Ukraine would have been a new colonial acquisition and a new pool of collateral to borrow against. Alas, that collateral is now gone and the US debt pyramid just had some blocks knocked out at the bottom.

Jan 07 03:12 (changed)




NLB

I am wondering which one is worse: a POTUS who is billionaire and surrounded with billionaires, or a "lower class" POTUS who is "only" millionaire and dreams to be member of the billionaire class and works hard to assure the revolving door is open, as well as the 500k for a speech full of BS. Lol

Jan 07 04:21




Dmitry Orlov 

NLB, they are both worse. What's better is a dedicated public servant selflessly working for the common good. But Americans don't deserve that.

Jan 07 05:08



NLB Replying to Dmitry Orlov

"In God we trust" 

Jan 07 05:12

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